

Tale of the COSTEP Opportunity

I had the opportunity to work for the Indian Health Service this summer. I was stationed at the area office in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The area office provides services to seven service units and numerous clinics. My supervisor was a general engineer. By observing his attitude and his willingness to help me succeed, I gathered that IHS was an enjoyable place to work. My first day at work, I traveled to a service unit and learned more usable knowledge that day than in two weeks of university class work.

In the area office, I worked with two engineers, an architect, an engineering technician, and a wonderful secretary. Even with all my travel, I never once worked with an unpleasant person. Everyone was friendly and made me feel right at home. Next spring, I will receive my degree in Mechanical Engineering at OSU in Stillwater. This internship allowed me to work through problems and to apply what I have learned at my university. It also allowed me to use knowledge that I have learned in addition to engineering. I was able to work in graphic design, was involved in small projects at the service units, and was exposed to the large projects of IHS.



My time spent in the area office was focused on implementing TMA asset management software. During the summer, I visited six service units and three clinics. I reported to facility managers and assisted them with various tasks. Each service unit and clinic owns costly mechanical equipment. Facility management staff perform preventive maintenance on the equipment to prolong its life expectancy. The paperwork and amount of equipment involved is surprisingly large. Simply put, the TMA software will manage work orders and track costs associated with all equipment on the preventive maintenance program. The efficiency of this software and its benefit to the organization is great compared to the current means of operation.

I dedicated a large portion of my time at the service units to data collection. I sorted through paperwork and physically viewed equipment to gather the needed information for the software. In the office, I did research to fill in gaps in the information and then transferred the data to an Excel template. This template allows for mass upload to the TMA software.

Each summer, the facility managers and support personnel attend a week long meeting to train and conduct business. I was an active part of the meeting and was asked to design the exterior graphics for the meeting binders. Two days of the meeting were spent on JCAHO training. During this training I saw the importance of policy and procedure. It is comforting to know that health care is regulated in such a manner, but it does take a lot of work for a hospital to comply with regulations. I was able to use my training to assist a facility manager with the large amount of necessary paperwork required to pass a JCAHO inspection.

Before beginning my COSTEP I was familiar with the services offered by IHS. However, I had no idea how the Indian Health Care System operated internally. Both my sister and I were born in Indian Hospitals here in Oklahoma. I have been to the clinics to receive optometry, dental, and clinical services. This gave me a greater appreciation for the work I performed this summer. I understand firsthand how important quality healthcare is to the Indian people of Oklahoma. It was an honor to serve the Indian Nations of Oklahoma.

I worked full-time but was able to use weekends and evenings to explore Oklahoma. I spent weekends outdoors doing what I love. I was able to camp and fish, spend time on the many lakes that Oklahoma has to offer, play volleyball with new found friends and experience so much more that Oklahoma has to offer. I would recommend the COSTEP program to any student who wants to learn and help the people that we share this great country with.

Thank You,

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